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THE FIGHT NIGHT

Continued from page 7

97 percent Mex/Chicano, used to be around 99. In the five years I've been coming here the predominant Latin hairstyle has gone from greaser to razorcut/mod but there's still a decent helping of plaster-downs and hardcore DAs, even some old-timey mustachioed types. Everybody (all races) sports this well-practiced "I get laid a lot" look, a very specific brand of macho you don't get at, say, basketball games at the Forum. Avoiding the nearest usher, I move my act down to row G of ringside. Five bucks'll *still* get you far in this palace of punch. Seat is on the aisle the fighers exit from. One of Ramirez's cornermen knocks his bucket into my knee and apologizes — the second overt politeness of the night (Jimmy's laryngitis was #1). String ends abruptly, however, as a handler for Rocky Garcia bangs the same knee with *his* bucket and just keeps walkin' on. Pull my knee in for the Roberto Torres entourage and get a whiff of 16 tons of liniment or something on Senor T, a sign of who the heck knows what. Stats on this pair of featherweights (126) have Rocky, from Placentia, at 19-0 and fragrant Roberto at 36-4. The latter ratio of wins to losses you can take with a grain of NaCl as this veteran is, we're told, from Michoacan. Suspension of disbelief is the order of bizness when you're dealing with out-of-towners and foreigners, a suspension borrowed directly from boxing's companion sport, wrestling (handled Wednesdays and Fridays at this venue by Mrs. Eaton's son, convicted murder conspirator Judo Gene Lebell). Wrestling metaphor is highly apt if you check the back of your program and notice the variety of hype employed: "Boxers from Japan are known for their fierce brawling style. Katsu Okubo is no different and he says he will prove it next week when he fights unbeaten Cubanito Perez. 'Perez will fall just like his stablemate Frankie Baltazar [who you kinda doubt the Jap has ever heard of] did recently.' "

In any event Torres doesn't *look* like he's 36-4 unless the 4 represents his last four outings, and even if that's the case he sure don't look like he was ever 36-0. Guy seems beaten and bitter, bitter about who knows what down Michoacan way and bitter about having to come up here just to be done in by some local cheese. Prancing around during the intros like a chicken awaiting slaughter or an ordeal of a reprieve that won't be much better, there's no way he seems even faintly preoccupied with notions of victory. Perfect setup (compliments of matchmaker Don "War a Week" Chargin) for a clumsy, untried relative newcomer with a less than impressive kayo ratio (only 10 out of 17) and a nose that looks like it's been hit (repeatedly) with a baseball bat.

As expected, Torres is too terminally punchy to be aggressive in any sense of the word, but in the first couple rounds he occasionally flashes what might once have passed for skill. Mostly waiting to be jabbed so he can counter with misdirected roundhouse swats, Garcia is flustered when Torres is either not jabbing at all or following his left with a right (rare as these combo punches are, there's a definite habitual purposiveness to the smelly, bitter one's surges of interest). Eventually Torres finds himself in the unlikely position of pursuer (somebody's gotta do it), but doesn't seem able to recall the actual procedure for landing a meaningful blow (and appears downright *perplexed* when, almost inadvertently, he *does*).

As so often happens at the Olympic what loomed as a sure-fire theatre-of-cruelty performance has turned out (thru its inability to deliver even *that* idealized form) to be something wholly other, maybe Pirandello by way of Bukowski, maybe pre-aesthetic ghetto street theater, maybe *Fat City* as bumbling improv (maybe something else). But no matter how you look at it, this is the thee-ate-er bargain of this or any year. Mark Taper Forum and all the Equity waiver pits can go take a flying dump. First round to last something excruciatingly *real* is unearthed re the frailities of human endeavor, a real authentic gusher that, locally, only this dungeon of sweat & poverty can automatically deliver, week in/week out. Oceans of concrete mystery too, like who knows if maybe Torres is reluctant to engage in combat because he once *killed somebody* with his lethal straight right to the adam's ap? I mean, who the heck *knows?* So I'm tellin' you right now (unsolicited testimonial time): if you don't come and catch at least a week of this before they tear the place down and turn it into a shopping mall you ain't got culture that adds up to diddle.

Getting back to the fight at hand, one thing it surely isn't is street*fight* theater. Maybe in a free-for-all (biting and kicking allowed), they could wallop the daylights out of your little sis, but here & now you'd be hard put to spot anything that passes for street smarts or even good wholesome street fury. They're just circling around in an animated dance where avoidance of danger is the name of the game. Torres, the minimally more adept of the two, is able to consistently avoid heavy leather simply by tilting his head out of harm's way, so slow is Garcia to calculate his trajectory against a moving target. A minute and a half later the fiasco is over.

Close but unanimous" decision for Garcia, the second most worthless undefeated of all time (Garza is the most worthless). Some halfassed boos but nobody's really complaining. Nor are they throwing money into the ring as often happens following a thriller. Pissing is on my mind so I make tracks for the nearest men's room (only two on the whole ground floor — architect was a sadist), foregoing the chance to see if the loser's liniment or whatever is still in evidence. Piss line's already immense, folks evidently didn't wait for the stinker to end. Far from the longest I've ever seen but might as well hold it in, sometimes these things're so long people're doin' it on the floor, in the garbage, whatever's around. Urinary freedom on parade. Naw, it can wait (I convince myself), hobbling down to an even better seat that hopefully doesn't belong to a pisser away on leave (ushers don't give a hoot in hell by now).

Bell rings for the mainer of the two events and whudda ya know if I am not joined two seats away by former Olympic Aud. junior welter Victor Abraham, on hand to

Continued on page 51

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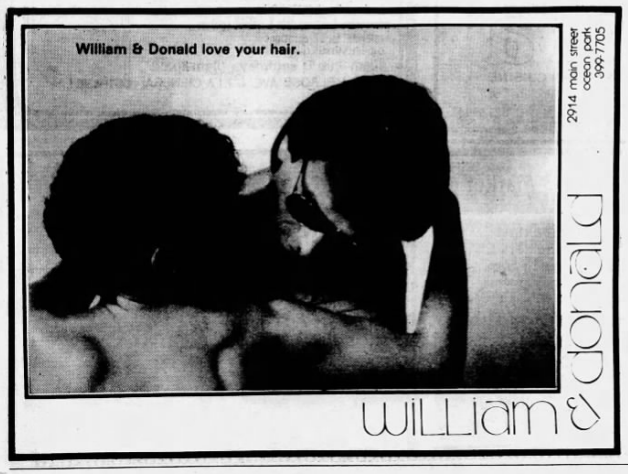

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